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THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .'
James Connolly



The Alumina dispute

THE DR. LONG STORY



The Medical Mission during the Civil War

THE ALUMINA DISPUTE

There is no black and white explanation for the present Alumina dispute. The issues involved are complex and varied. There are disagreements between groups of workers and individual companies, between shop stewards and their trade unions and between the main company, Alumina Construction Limited, and the striking workers. But though the dispute is many-sided, one thing is certain. The main losers are the 1,300 workers and their families who will have to needlessly suffer the loss of at least a month's wages.

The dispute started when forty-seven steelfixers employed by the Wimpey/Hegarty firm withdrew their labour and placed a picket on the main gate of the site. The reason given for the action of the steelfixers was dissatisfaction with a bonus scheme. The strike was supported by the twenty-two site shop stewards, who issued a statement declaring that when the steelfixers had achieved their objectives there would be "a rush for the gate" by other groups of workers with similar grievances. The 1,300 workers employed by the different contractors were not consulted and had no say in the decision of the steelfixers to place pickets.

The strike was the eleventh since the contract commenced about eighteen months ago. As in the previous strikes, the rest of the workers did not pass the pickets. Most of the past disputes were of short duration and were resolved through the intervention of the trade unions. All the strikes were lightning action affairs and were contrary to the terms of the site agreement. In no case was there a ballot vote of all the workers to go on strike or to support any of the strikes.

The majority of the disputes were caused by small minority groups of workers who were unhappy with their bonus payments. Much of the dissatisfaction arose from the disparity of in earnings between workers employed by different contractors and operating a variety of bonus schemes. It should also be said that much of this trouble was brought about not only by badly designed bonus schemes but also by inefficient, short-sighted and sometimes dishonest managements.

Could any of these disputes have been prevented? Industrial relations trouble has broken out on almost all large scale construction jobs in the country. The nature of the work, the large number of workers involved, the long hours and job pressures and the relatively short duration of the contracts are all factors in the cause of the trouble. There is also the desire, mainly by the workers who travel from one big site to another to improve on the conditions and wages of existing site agreements.

In the light of previous experience of disputes on big construction contracts, a number of carefully prepared steps were taken before work started, in an attempt to avoid dangers and pitfalls. The Alumina site agreement was only concluded and signed after five months of intensive negotiations. The agreement was the best of its kind ever negotiated for an Irish building site and brought improvements in almost all aspects of previous agreements for similar building sites. The average earnings, with overtime, on the job are about double the amount earned by building workers throughout the country.

The Alumina company set up its own site and office structure to supervise the placing of contracts and the management of industrial relations and personnel matters. For the first time in the history of the Irish building industry a trade union official was based on the site on a full-time basis, to deal with day-to-day problems as they arose.

Despite this preparation, and the increased trade union services, industrial relations did not improve as the job

progressed. In January of this year, during another dispute, the Alumina management let it be known that it was considering the closure of the site if the strike continued. When all work came to a standstill during the present steelfixers' strike, the company carried out its threat and closed the site. The job seems destined to remain closed until the Alumina firm is satisfied that agreements entered into by the unions and voted on by their members will be accepted by all the workers on site. Another condition laid down by the management concerning selective re-employment when the job re-opens has little hope of being accepted by the workers or the unions and will have to be withdrawn before serious negotiations for a resumption of work can be undertaken.

On the workers' side a number of grievances have still to be resolved. Perhaps the biggest source of complaint is the lack of a co-ordinated bonus scheme to ensure an equitable return for the output of similar grades of workers employed by the different contractors. The drastic fluctuations in bonus earnings, the chopping and changing of targets and the failure to exercise an overall control of bonus schemes have all contributed to the sense of grievance and frustration of many of the workers.

The shop stewards have made a demand for participation in negotiations with management. This is not a new concept in the building industry where the vast majority of the officers of the craft unions are part-time officials, who do most of the day-to-day negotiations outside of Dublin. Shop stewards have in the past taken part in negotiations on other large sites. It would be unrealistic to expect that the entire twenty-two shop stewards on the site should go to the conference table as an entire and separate body from the Alumina Trade Union Group. There is, however, no reason why some of the shop stewards, with the support of the workers on the site and their trade unions, should not become accredited delegates to Alumina Trade Union Group.

The inclusion of some of the shop stewards in the group could have a beneficial effect on trade union democracy on the site. As well as giving the shop stewards a voice in negotiations, it would also extend the responsibility for the implementation of the site agreement over a wider group. The broader negotiating group would inevitably place extra demands on the shop stewards as they processed their sectional demands within the larger framework of the rights of all workers on the site. Groups can only work through consensus. But provided there is goodwill and a democratic spirit among the unions and shop stewards, there is no reason why the shop stewards should not respond to this challenge.

The uneasy relationship between unions and shop stewards underlines the difficulty in tackling the larger question of workers and trade union unity. The tragedy of Alumina is the disputes between workers and the fellow-workers and between trade unions and shop stewards. At a time when the need to industrialise is vital for the whole future of the Irish people, it is measure of the workers' weakness that this drive is being retarded by internecine squabbling. There are further considerations. There is the question of agreements entered into by the unions, and their terms voted on and agreed by the majority of the workers, being broken by a small minority. There is the question of pickets being placed by small groups in the pursuit of sectional interests and the virtual locking out of the majority of the workers.

Finally, there is the question of the future of Alumina in Ireland. The project is the largest of its kind in the country, and there is still almost £300 million to be spent

DREAMS OF CONQUEST

One of Charlie Haughey's last gifts to the nation under "the old Government" (when he was Minister for Health) was the "Conquest pack", a gimmick designed to help people conquer the smoking habit.

Now, instead of trying to get matches quenched and fags stubbed out, Haughey and "the new Government" are into the business of stoking up a few more dangerous fires: to put it bluntly, they are now lighting the fuses for future bombs in Northern Ireland - and perhaps in the Republic as well.

That may seem a harsh description of the Government's present diplomatic offensive with its sophisticated, "statesmanlike" appeals to reason, its tete-a-tetes with President Giscard, and requests for sympathy and understanding from "the international community". What link could all this civilised behaviour possibly have with the mad bombers, the mindless thugs who plague Northern Ireland?

The answer is that there is a link, and a very strong one. The "mindless thugs" are not mindless, they are not simply shooting and bombing for the fun of it, but for a cause: the cause of forcing Northern Ireland into a united Ireland, against the will of the vast majority of its population. And what are Haughey, Lenihan, Woods and company up to in their diplomatic offensive, if not trying to persuade the British to expel Northern Ireland from the UK, regardless of the wishes of the people who live there? The aim is the same, and the two approaches complement each other: in fact they need each other. The diplomatic offensive rides on the back of the I.R.A.'s

war, and feeds it in turn by keeping Provos hopes alive.

The Government doesn't really believe that their pleadings will produce a British withdrawal. In fact, if that looked like happening, they would be panic-stricken. What they do hope to achieve, however, is to keep the pot boiling: to prevent the integration of Northern Ireland into the UK, to keep a question-mark over the future of Northern Ireland, to keep alive long-term Republican hopes (and thereby, Unionist fears). Put another way: the diplomatic offensive will reinforce the sense of uncertainty which Atkins' messing has built up, and encourage the IRA to keep plugging away. And just as the existing climate of uncertainty has revived the activities of the Protestant paramilitaries, more uncertainty will lead to more action from that quarter. Plenty of innocent people will suffer - and maybe not just in the North. But what matter, if peace and stability can be kept at bay, if our hopes of conquering the fourth green field can be kept alive, if the question-mark can be kept in place over Northern Ireland's future - a question-mark written in the smoke of burning cars, buildings and people.

While Haughey and his crew are soft-talking international opinion, it is unlikely that they are secretly lusting after the smell of burning flesh. In practice, however, keeping the possibility of a united Ireland alive in this way means death, destruction... and a diversion from the social problems of the Republic itself. The labour movement has nothing to gain, and plenty to lose, from this kind of "peaceful" offensive.

FINE GAEL ARD FHEIS

Fine Gael is a nationalist party, but it isn't too confident of the prospects for nationalist success. "The Unionists are very strong", muses the Fine Gaeler to himself. "If you make it clear you're nationalist you'll never get anywhere with them". Fine Gael's instinct is to devise its Northern policy as confidence trickery, to try and recreate the Sunningdale situation where, as previously a nationalist may be all things to all men.

Fitzgerald is horrified by Haughey's nationalistic openness. But he dare not oppose Fianna Fail's Northern policy. He went out of his way to tell the Fine Gael Ard Fheis that British politicians should say "publicly what many of them say privately, that the logical, ultimate solution is an Ireland ruled by Irish people in harmony with each other." Remove from this formula the wig, the dark glasses, the rouge, fur coat and fishnet stockings, and what have we here? None other than the old whore, the declaration of intent to withdraw!

Paddy Harte annoyed some nationalists by saying that the British guarantee should remain, but he reasonably protested that this statement was taken out of context.

Harte's problem is this: his brain cannot organise what his senses tell him about the Ulster Protestant community. So he is an ideological wreck. No soul in Dail Eireann is more hopelessly lost.

Get the

Limerick Socialist

every month

on the project. A statement by a shop steward contained at least one accurate phrase when it described the Alumina site as a test case.

The choice facing Irish workers is clear-cut. They can fritter away their time, energy and wages in disruptive tactics and in the process delay and hinder the industrialisation of the country, or they can use their poten-

tial strength to build a strong disciplined and united working class in an industrialised Ireland. The Alumina dispute is indeed a test case. Irish workers are at a crossroads. They can try to turn the clock back twenty years, or they can unite and move forward together to a new era of working class solidarity and progress.

DR. LONG WRITES HIS OWN HISTORY of the LIMERICK MEDICAL MISSION

THE DR. LONG STORY

PART TEN

THE YEAR 1899

"LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE" IN IRELAND.

At the commencement of the year 1899 it was the general belief that "Father" Tierney's assault on the Mission had been completely successful, that the work had been nipped in the bud, and that there was but one course open to us, viz. to close the Mission and leave the city for good. The Roman Catholic Church, through the pulpit and press, had thundered condemnation upon us and excommunication upon all Roman Catholics who should venture to attend the Mission. Many of the Protestant residents also joined in this condemnation, believing that what Rome said was true, that we had insulted Roman Catholic patients at the dispensary when speaking on religious subjects, and were using illegitimate methods to induce an acceptance of our views, such as promises of medical relief, money, or clothes. The Mission was closely watched by a picket of Confraternity men, and the spy system was complete throughout the city. However, the storm was really over for the present, and I was able to move about without a close guard of police and without fear of being mobbed. My own feelings were those of thankfulness and praise to God, and I was greatly strengthened by the knowledge that many Roman Catholics strongly disapproved of "Father" Tierney's methods of attack; and also by the gratitude of old patients. Our Committee took a firm stand in supporting the work, and we were conscious of the fact that we were being upheld in prayer by God's people in many places.

The opposition was not greater than I had expected, and I felt assured that it was not against myself personally, but a Satanic attack to prevent the spread of Gospel Truth and the circulation of God's Word amongst the people. My fellow-workers and I experienced God's presence with us in a very real manner, and believed that He who had delivered us in the storm would not forsake us in the quiet waiting time which succeeded. The dispensary was never closed and was never empty at the dispensary hour, and though the attendances were often very small, yet we were encouraged by the opportunities we had of giving relief and of witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life".

During this year, in the month of March, the Society's Movable Wooden Hall was erected on the outskirts of the city. In this Hall evangelistic addresses and lectures on doctrinal subjects were given by agents of the Irish Church Missions Society and were largely attended, chiefly by Protestants. The Limerick Leader, a Parnellite paper, accepted and printed advertisements of these addresses, and for this reason it and the Wooden Hall services were denounced by "Father" Tierney at the weekly meeting of the "Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family". This paper in its next issue recorded how, "in the height of his indignation, he slammed the paper down on the pulpit, he struck it a blow with his hand, and said he would leave it to the Confraternity to deal with." Much blessing resulted from the meetings, and several Roman Catholics were converted to God.

THE WELSH FAMILY

For some months a Mr. Welsh and his wife had been coming to the Mission for instruction; he was a gardener and she was a laundress. Welsh had been a Protestant, but was induced to become a Roman Catholic when he married. Mrs. Welsh and her people were all Roman Catholics. They had four little children. Welsh was a

member of the Men's Confraternity, and Mrs. Welsh of the Women's Sodality. Both now had learned to trust the Saviour, and wished to leave the Roman Catholic Church, as they had ceased to believe in much of its teaching. The following is a short history of their difficulties, and illustrates the methods of persecution adopted by the Roman Catholic church in such cases:-

On Sunday, August 6th, Mr. and Mrs. Welsh and two children attended service at Trinity Church, Limerick (Church of Ireland). On the 10th Mrs. Welsh wrote the following letter to a young woman who had passed through great persecution and had left Limerick:

Rosbrien Road,
August 10th.

Dear Molly,

May God be with you wherever you go. You are away now from your enemies, thank God, and your battle is over. You were a real good soldier for Jesus. I will suffer, too. Yes, Molly, I will suffer for our Lord as you did. If they stone us to death we will not go back to them. Pray for us, and get others to pray for us.

Your sincere friend,
K. WELSH.

They both attended service again on the 13th, and were shouted at on their way home. The following day a crowd came round their house and some stones were thrown. On Wednesday, 16th, after going to work, Welsh's employer paid him his week's wages and sent him away, giving no reason for doing so, though he had worked for him for five years. On the 18th their house was again attacked by a crowd who gave cheers for "Father" Tierney, and shouted: "To Hell with Dr. Long." A number of girls assembled in front of the house singing hymns to the Virgin Mary, and many in the crowd showed their beads and crucifixes, while they shouted to those in the house: "Ye are all going straight to hell".

This family was now in a pitiable condition. They could only leave their house under a guard of police; both husband and wife were out of employment, and had no hope under the circumstances of being able to procure situations again in Limerick. Three of the children were removed to a place of safety for a time, while Mr. and Mrs. Welsh and their baby remained in their guarded home, steadfastly trusting that God would take care of them and provide for them. About 2 o'clock on Sunday morning, August 20th, their house was again attacked by a mob; the windows and sashes were all broken in, and large stones thrown into the interior, while threats to stone the inmates and to burn the thatched roof over their heads were freely used. The Welshes escaped by the back door; Mrs. Welsh, with her baby, climbing a wall into a neighbouring Protestant's house, where she found a refuge; while her husband went to look for the police, who came on the scene when the damage had been done and all had fled. After this we received the Welshes into a room in the Mission House, and in a short time they found a situation out of Limerick, where they have got on well, and have reared their family in the Christian Faith.

"FATHER" TIERNEY AND THE NURSE

DURING the closing year of the nineteenth century the Mission continued steadily to gain strength. Nurse Newton took Nurse Shortle's place in the dispensary and quickly found her way to the hearts of her poor patients. The number attending increased from month to month,

and the whole year passed quietly without any public notice being taken of the work. The year 1900 was one of opportunity, in which the seed of God's Word was sown in many hearts, and many precious opportunities were given of ministering to the sick poor in the dispensary. The work was also bearing fruit, for we knew of ten Roman Catholics who had come out and confessed their faith in Christ alone as their Saviour; four of these received Holy Communion in Trinity Church on Easter Sunday morning, while others attended service in different Protestant churches.

Nurse Newton was untiring in her efforts to minister to the poor people attending the dispensary; she loved the little children, and was able to visit in many of their homes at this time, being the means of winning back some who had been terrorised and feared to attend. During the year she paid 1,212 visits, often attending the same case every day for weeks. The people loved and trusted her, and will never forget all the kind words and deeds which she so freely bestowed on them.

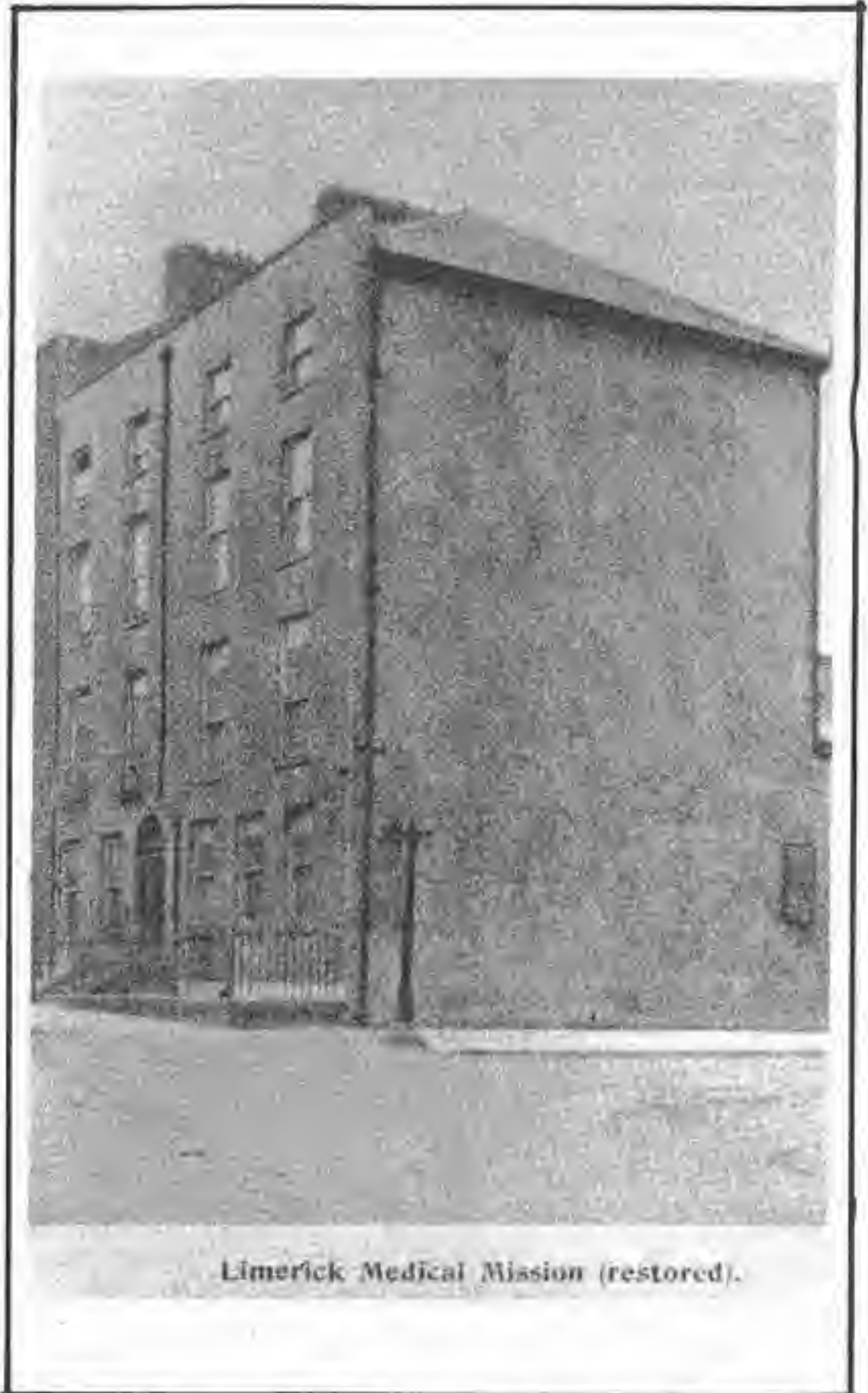
During the autumn we were greatly encouraged and the door seemed to be opening wider every day. Many seemed delighted to sit in the waiting-room and hear about Jesus, what He had done, and was willing to do, for sinners. Nurse Newton started a class for her little patients on Sunday afternoon - about twelve was her usual number - this she carried on for several months and then efforts were made to break it up, rough boys being set to watch the children in the street, and they succeeded in preventing many from attending. This was the first indication that efforts were again being made to interfere with those attending. We felt that the work would not be allowed to go on long before another storm would break upon it, for we were enjoying too good a time to last. The influence of the Mission was being felt, and this was raising the tide of opposition against it.

Christmas passed quietly and a new century dawned upon the world, the first week of which was perhaps the most critical in the history of the Mission, as two incidents occurred which brought down the thunder of Rome in all its power upon us in a second desperate attempt to drive the Mission out of Limerick. These incidents were connected with a little girl named Violet Hegarty, and with Nurse Newton's Christmas treat for her little class of children.

VIOLET HEGARTY

Two of the first converts to come out in connection with the Dublin Medical Mission were James Hegarty and his wife. They were respectable people in reduced circumstances, Mrs. Hegarty's brother being a Roman Catholic parish priest. They had a large family of young children, some of whom were attending school - this was in 1892. Mr. D.L. Moody's Mission proved a great blessing to the family, and the children were sent to Protestant Sunday and day schools. Violet was only four years of age at this time and was brought up from infancy as a Protestant. For six years I attended this family, as the father was often obliged to leave his work through suffering from severe attacks of asthma. Mrs. Hegarty was a hard-working woman, and helped to provide for their family.

In the summer of 1900 Violet, then just twelve years of age, happened to meet a girl friend of hers, who was on her way to a pawn-shop with a clock, etc. She went with her, and in a few minutes afterwards found herself arrested by a policeman. Both girls were accused of having stolen the goods from Messrs. Arnott and Co., Dublin. They were charged before Mr. Wall, the police magistrate, with the result that they were sent to industrial schools. During the hearing of the charge the father was not asked about the religion of Violet, and as she was entered on the charge sheet as a Roman Catholic without his knowledge, she was sent to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Reformatory, Limerick, which is



Limerick Medical Mission (restored).

managed by nuns from the Good Shepherd Convent.

The father now appealed to the Recorder against the decision of the police magistrate, and his appeal was successful. The Recorder made an order for the discharge of Violet from the industrial school, and that she should be handed over to the custody of her father. Hegarty sent this order to me, with a letter asking me to act for him, and authorising me to receive Violet on his behalf; this I was glad to do for him, knowing how terribly he was troubled about the whole business.

On the morning of January 4th, 1901, Mrs. Long and I called at the Good Shepherd Convent, Clare Street, and asked for the Rev. Mother, Mrs. Bridget Haugh, the manageress of the industrial school. I explained the case to her, and handed her the Recorder's order and the father's letter. She refused to read either, and told me Violet was under care and would not be given up without an order from the Chief Secretary. The solicitor who was acting for Hegarty, on hearing of this refusal, wrote to the manageress, informing her that she would be responsible for such unlawful detention, and liable for damages for wrongfully imprisoning Violet. No reply was made to this letter. On the 8th January I called again at the Convent and repeated the demand on the father's behalf. This time a priest entered the room with the manageress and asked what brought me there. He was angry at my presence, and when I showed the order and letter as before, he refused to read them, saying I had no business to come there, and referred me to a Mr. Doyle, who acted as solicitor for the manageress. The father was now obliged to proceed against the manageress with a writ of "Habeas Corpus", which resulted in Violet Hegarty being produced in Court in Dublin and handed over to him.

CORKSCREW KELLY

John Kelly T.D., represents a tradition in Fine Gael which (like most Fine Gael traditions) is more ancient than admirable - that of the demagogue who pretends he is not a demagogue, the twister who pretends to talk straight. In a speech in Co. Clare on March 16th. Kelly savaged Haughey for his little anti-Partition Campaign. "Barren, unworkable words without an hour's serious thought behind them", he described Haughey's speech at the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis. Of course, this was what "guff Republicans" like Sile de Valera wanted. These people had never reconquered an inch of Unionist territory or changed one Unionist heart, but what did that matter to them? They were prepared to fight the anti-Partition campaign over again for the sake of that warm tribal feeling, despite the historical evidence of its failure thirty years ago. Wouldn't you swear that the man was a member of Socialists Against Nationalism? Well, he isn't - he's in Fine Gael, and before his speech was over he had said plenty to prove it.

Fine Gael is, of course, a more sensible, well-behaved, old maidenly kind of party than Fianna Fail. It criticises the reckless expression of nationalism by Fianna Fail. But when it does so it is not criticising nationalism, it is criticising recklessness. Fine Gael will not dare say that it is wrong to be nationalist, when the odds favour the opposition. For the sake of nationalism, let us be all things to all men, says the Fine Gaeler.

This is what Kelly has to say:- "If Mr. Haughey was proposing that the Irish and British Governments between them should permanently dispose of Northern

Ireland's future, he was proposing merely a Sunningdale minus the only thing that made Sunningdale uniquely worth while, namely the participation of a very substantial element of Unionist opinion." (Irish Times, March 17th). For what or for whom was Sunningdale uniquely worth while for doing precisely what Haughey wants to do. What made it uniquely worth while was that "a very substantial element of Unionist opinion" went along with the exercise.

Of course, this element of Unionist opinion only went along with the exercise on the understanding that the Dublin Government was abandoning its territorial claim. The party representing this element of Unionist opinion (Brian Faulkner's Unionist Party) was wiped out when it continued to work within the terms of Sunningdale after it had become clear that the S.D.L.P. and the Coalition were trying to pull a nationalist confidence trick. But it was uniquely worth while, says the Fine Gaeler, and really, if Charlie Haughey begins to say in public what all of us, deep down in our hearts feel, it'll never be possible to pull such a trick again!

"On the whole, I think I would rather have Mr. Lynch and his woolly-waffle than Mr. Haughey and his futile indignity in which he is involving us". Of course he would. We needn't doubt his sincerity. Oh, to have Jack and Garret and Frank back together again, all billing and cooing over each other, and saying:- "While we all hold the aspiration... still if only the poor S.D.L.P. could be given Cabinet seats... we might forget about other things... till a better opportunity arises". Yeeach!

POEMS

Gerard Ryan

IN PARTEEN GRAVEYARD

Between the graves' green loneliness
An old woman.
Blackshawled and bent,
Moves with feeble tread
Pausing, and mumbling to herself,
"O God, I'm sure You know
How lonely now is life for me
Since You have called away my son."
Moving now more tremulous and slow.
A robin from an aged yew
Spilled sounds as near to human grief
As ever bird had done.

Faltering now—
With skeletal hands outstretched
Before a new made grave,
And sinking down beside a leaning stone
Where time's white tears have dried.
Fingering the ivy's stems
As if it were a harp
Her sorrow filled the summer air
And stilled the rapture of a rising lark.

SONG FOR MARGARET McCANN

Here I stand behind the bar
And sit, and move, and move again,
My heart sore longing.
Dreaming and dreaming
That someone will come through the door
That I could really love,
Someone who would care for me;
But so far he has not come.
I wait and wait,
Then weary, weary,
I pray and pray
And go to bed
To sleep and dream again
Trusting till tomorrow.

After the slaughter of the swans on the river Shannon at Limerick

A sequel to a longer poem:
For Desmond O'Grady

Featly, sweetly, gaily gliding
Beateous birds, the blue air riding,
Come to their loved haunts again,
Forgetting death, forgetting pain.

Skein on skein, the bright air winging,
Flight of bells in distance ringing,
Swan and cygnet, take this river
Keep it beautiful forever.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CREDIT UNIONS

Dooradoyle,
Limerick.
30/4/'80

I am a former bank official (and a regular reader of the Limerick Socialist) and I can tell you that the letter from Gerard A. Gleeson in your April edition made most interesting reading for me. His sister, Mrs. O'Donovan, was certainly "put through the mangle" before she succeeded in getting back the £135 she lodged with St. John's Credit Union on 25 May, 1979.

That she did duly recover her money seems entirely due to the persevering efforts of Mr. Gleeson, and the whole affair raises some interesting points about credit unions in general.

When Mrs. O'Donovan was refused the refund of the £135, Gerard Gleeson went to see the credit union official on 8 June to discuss the matter with him. He was told that there was a great mystery about the transaction and that the cashier was the soul of honesty. But it seems to the writer that the credit union did not hold Mrs. O'Donovan in a similar regard, since it withheld her £135 as long as it could, despite both the entry and the cashier's initials in her passbook.

As the matter has now, apparently, been written off as an unsolved mystery, the writer believes that it is time the members of this credit union branch started to ask some questions. The following are a few of the more obvious ones that come to mind:

1. Was this the only occasion in the history of the branch that a client's lodgement disappeared?
2. Was an independent auditor called in to check the books when the loss of the money was first discovered?
3. Has the £135 been made good, and if so, by whom? If the sum has not been made good, who 'stands' the loss?

There is a good reason why these and other questions should be asked. Each branch of the credit union is an entirely independent unit and if serious problems arise or if a branch gets into difficulties the matter is solely one for the branch's management committee. Neither the head office of the credit union movement nor any other branch has the responsibility or power to come to the aid of a branch in trouble.

This is an important consideration and one that is not generally known to the movement's members. And what

makes it an extremely important factor is that the very considerable credit union monies are being handled and managed by voluntary committees and workers. (The present total of credit union savings in the country is £110 million.)

Can things go wrong and can branches get into difficulties? At least three branches have run into trouble, mainly due to dishonest people getting into positions of trust, and to lax supervision.

But there is an even greater danger in the management of members' money that is not readily appreciated by the members themselves. For instance, how many branches in past years have put their surplus savings in government loans, when the price of such loans was near par, i.e. £100 government stock cost £100. At the present time there is a disastrous decline in the price of such stocks. A glance at any daily paper will show several government stocks quoted at £60/£65/£70 per £100. In other words, there has been a loss of £30/£40 per £100!

The reality of this situation will only come to light at some Christmas or holiday period when, with sudden and heavy withdrawals, these stocks may have to be sold.

It is perhaps worthy of note at this point that in the decade 1920-'30 the Redemptorist Fathers organised the Confraternity members into a savings bank. This bank was run and managed by voluntary workers. When the total savings reached £50,000, the Redemptorists became frightened that something could go wrong and bring a financial scandal on top of them. In 1931/'32 the bank was closed down and most of the depositors transferred their money to the Limerick Savings Bank.

In the light of this experience how do other savings bodies manage their affairs? All banks, big and small, must have their books audited annually, and a large framed copy of the balance sheet must be displayed in each branch. The building societies go one better. When their auditors complete the balance sheets, a copy is posted to each depositor.

The writer believes that it is imperative that each credit union depositor be furnished with an annual financial statement of the branch's accounts. This provision would at least ensure that some of the more obvious dangers outlined above would be reduced.

In the case of credit unions, as with other institutions in society, the watchword should be — "Be Vigilant!"

Eamon Dillon.

THE G.A.A.

What's their game?

The "hand pass" may come or go but the G.A.A.'s line on the North goes on forever. Prior to their recent Annual Congress in Newcastle, Co. Down, Sean Kilfeather writing in the Irish Times (20/3/80) had the following to say:

The three motions which will cause the most controversy within the G.A.A. and outside it are those referring to "torture" in H-Block. The point has already been made that the H-Block motion is a matter of humanitarianism and not politics. That is clearly, a lot of clap-trap. The H-Block protest is being made by a group of prisoners who are demanding "political" status. A man who is deprived of "political status" is not being tor-

tured merely by being asked to wear prison clothing. The question is, why is the G.A.A. interested only in the humanitarianism issues both in Ireland and elsewhere. What about the itinerant problem, vandalism, homelessness, hunger, women's rights etc?

The G.A.A. clearly typifies at an organisational level a great deal of the humbug, hypocrisy and double think that exists in Southern society about "the lads" and "the North". It's high time they concentrated on the affairs of the playing field and left the "fourth green field", which is quite capable of looking after itself, alone. That more people in Southern society are coming around to this point of view is indicated by Kilfeather's comments.

THE CORPORATION

PART FOUR

The New Mayor

FROM SHAWN-A-SCOOB

by Michael Hogan

Reader, be patient for a while,
 I'll show the farce in funnier style;
 I lay my cat-o'-nine-tails down
 While ushering Shawn-a-Scoob to town.
 Now had the city, in confusion,
 Been deluged with a revolution,
 As if the blaze of Dutch Bill's cannon
 Roared from the centre to the Shannon,
 But one bombastic babbler rose
 The gipsy turmoil to compose;
 A knave who, in his nightly dreams,
 Wove and concocted plots and schemes.
 As the weather-cock wheels about
 To the north, east, west and south,
 He wheeled and twisted every way
 Where'er his vile self-interest lay;
 To-day, a patriot bold and clever,
 To-morrow, courting Castle-favour:
 On every side he slyly set
 The meshes of his spider-net,
 He loved his country to a letter,
 But loved himself, aye, ten times better;
 And if he could but fleece or pluck her,
 He cared not if the devil took her!
 "My friends," he said, "I make a movement,
 To your honors an improvement,
 You all can howl and fight like bears,
 But all you asses can't be Mayors;
 So now, for peace-sake, let's consider,
 And put our heads and brains together,
 To leave the Mayor's legal sway,
 To the next man that comes the way,
 O'er Thomond Bridge, from County Clare,
 Boor—Begger—Let him be our Mayor!"
 All that the able speaker hinted,
 Seem'd very fair, and they consented,
 Turning their eyes towards County Clare,
 To see who fortune favoured there.
 Fortune recorded in her book,
 That day, a miracle of good luck;
 For, lo, the man whose happy fate,
 To rule the town's judicial state,
 Came o'er the bridge, in hasty fuss,
 From the brown hills of Glounngrass.
 A load of brooms, secured with tack,
 Lay, like a mountain, on his back:
 These to the city he came to sell,
 To buy his children milk and meal.

Poor devil, since the day before,
 Famine his hungry stomach tore;
 Lank, lean and languid was his look,
 He groaned at every step he took.
 Back on his poll his hat was cocked,
 Seeming to curse the day 'twas blocked;
 His coat to tattered shreds was gone,
 As if a pitch-fork shook it on;
 A canvass shirt of English spinning,
 Substituted Irish linen;
 Down on his back the collar lay,
 Bosom and sleeves were gone astray;
 At an unmentionable point,
 Where his old pants hung out of joint,
 His shirt-tail dangled in the wind,
 And almost swept the ground behind.
 His old "lopeens" were torn and tattered,
 His pounding brogues the gutter spattered,
 As if an elephant's bossy feet,
 Were splashing thro' the muddy street,
 Ancient lore and local fame,
 To the public gives his name;
 Shawn-a-Scoob, the mountain clown,
 Broom-man-Mayor of Limerick town;
 And since the city saw his "croobs,"
 'Tis overrun and damned with Scoobs.

Now when the Corporation saw
 This rustic piece of Nature's law;
 They waved their hats and cheered aloud,
 As Shawn came trudging thro' the crowd.
 Into the centre of the hall,
 They pulled the hero, brooms and all;
 He almost felt inclined to faint,
 Wondering what the devil they meant;
 He heard them saying, here and there,
 "That's the right stuff to make a Mayor!
 Give him the municipal robes!
 Henceforth we'll have a reign of Scoobs!
 Sergeants-at-mace, take off these brooms—
 Carry them to the inner rooms,
 And then return, and take your place
 Before his Worship's platter face!"